The Woman's Page of The Times-Dispatch

The Compromises in Women's Lives

When a woman wants a thing she wants it at once and she wants it just as she has planned to have it and thought about it.

She rarely gets just the thing she desires and asks for. Her first failures may cause her acute disappointment. Then she realizes that life for her is made up of a succession of compromises.

She doesn't incline to compromise. All women by nature are uncompromising. "Give us this," they say, "and this, or we wish nothing." Their utterance reflects their State of mind, but little by little the force of circumstances may bring them to a difference of opinion, may even make them feel that "a half loaf is better than no loaf."

"Whom first we love, we seldom wed," sings the poet. Probably he has in mind one of a woman's most inevitable compromises, that between the lover of her imagination and the lover of her reality. "Maud Miller" has not survived the test of time simply because she is the heroine of a pathetic romance well told in verse, but because she is the type of a womanhood that everywhere may be hiding "might-have-beens" in unromantic surroundings.

In every woman's heart there is, probably, a cherished ambition known only to herself, which represents the idealism of her nature. Some women know what it is to carry such an ambition through long years, only to compromise it at last. A story is told of one, a plain working woman whose chief desire had been a front yard with borders for flowers. She lived in a factory town, and in her struggle with poverty, had never been able to accomplish what represented so much to her. Finally, by dint of many sacrifices, she accumulated the modest sum required for her purpose. She sat herself down to rest and enjoy the pleasure of achievement. Then, from an unexpected quarter trouble came. The woman did not hesitate. She gave her precious hoard where she believed her duty called for it. But the giving of it broke within her the mainspring of hope which had sustained courage. After a while the effect of her disillusionment became evident to others. Then from an unexpected and sympathetic source came the gift of a front yard. While it was being inclosed, turfed and its borders were being planted she was away at a little seaside place, visiting her sister. The yard was fresh and blooming the May day when she was brought home. She came at night. In the morning she looked from her bed out upon the trim borders and the white fence that she had dreamed about for so long, and burst into tears. "Ah," she cried, "it is pretty and God knows I am thankful, but if I could have just done it myself." It was a compromise and not the supreme good, therefore, in her case, as in so many others.

As long as women do not compromise on questions of principle and hold fast to their ideals of honor, the general adaptment to substitution is only a part of the necessary education of life, a training which they must undergo and learn to accept with a cheerful resignation which can salve most of the ills of existence.

The woman who steels herself resolutely and defiantly against compromise, who insists from first to last on-her-way-or-no-way-at-all doctrine is a woman who is apt to be a loser every time. A compromise often supplies a vantage point from which progress to eventual success is easy.

AS YOUNG AND MIDDLE AGED VIEW THE QUESTION

The criticism passed by elderly people upon the young folk of the present time is that they are altogether devoid of sentiment so that the romance which used to cast a glamor over existence and render its courtship days entrancing is as hopelessly dead and buried and out-of-date as the ghost of Caesar might be on the streets of modern Rome.

Formerly the prospect of a ball or dance was sufficient to bring the roses to a woman's cheek, smiles to her lips, and put in array all the coquettish wiles with which the art of beguilement was enhanced. Now, that woman's daughter, along with other young maids and men, dances in the same matter-of-course spirit with which she walks, swims and plays tennis or golf. She takes her recreations, in and out of doors, with a gang of companions and in common with them, does not care for the flowers which no one of the present day thinks of sending. The moon may shine and the mocking bird sing her best, but the shining and singing fall on deaf ears, in so far as such unromantic youth is concerned.

Consequently, the young woman of to-day has discarded the mysterious and elusive element which formerly rendered her so fascinating, and men have become something quite different from the ardent and ingenuous type that used to worship at her shrine.

The mother of the very modern young woman feels sorry over the elimination of romance from the life of youth. It seems to the mother a pity that young people should grow up in ignorance of so much that is tender and sweet and beautiful, outside of and beyond the commonplace. Probably the mother's mother and grandmother felt in their day just as she does in hers, for the lament is invariably recurrent, the burden of years making always for clarity of vision regarding the shortcomings of a later generation.

But middle age hasn't a monopoly of criticism. Youth becomes critical in its turn, and wonders how elderly couples who have so few interests and diversions can be congenial and entertaining the one to the other. These elders are commiserated with because they do not play golf or tennis, or even croquet, and above all, because they do not care for motors or motor parties.

After all, therefore, the viewpoint is the thing to be mostly considered in the expression of opinion. Especially among women, for a mother and daughter nearly always feel a regret, in thinking of each other, invariably each believes the other to have missed from the sum of her womanly existence much that might have made it fuller, more rounded and more happily developed.

A Pointed Comment.

It was late winter, and our clergyman, a very old friend, was dining with us, and all were enjoying the roast turkey, when the hostess mildly remarked that she thought it would have to be the last one of the season. To the amusement of all at the table the small boy piped up:

"Why, Auntie! you said that three turkeys ago."

Smart suit of white serge, with collar of heavy Cluny lace, and decorated with straps of silver braid and silver buttons. Hat of white Tuscan braid, faced with plum velvet and trimmed with white plumes

Casino frock of white broderie anglaise, with jacket and skeleton tunic of black satin. The hat is a chic toque of black net with an enormous butterfly of heavy lace embroidered in pastel tints.

Beach frock of white tussor, trimmed with tarnished silver galloon, and touches of black velvet. Guimpe of silver lace. The large hat is of white crin faced with black velvet and trimmed with black ospreys.

—L'ART DE LA MODE.

Novel Valentine Party

The invitations to this valentine party were heart-shaped cards, on which were pasted the head of the hostess cut from snapshot pictures, and a small red heart. Below were lettered these words, "invites you to her Valentine Party," then the address, date and hour. Translated it read, "Miss Brown's head and heart invites you to her Valentine Party."

The walls of the rooms were decorated with large red and white hearts, in the centre of which were pretty girls' heads cut from the Woman's Home Companion covers.

A number of comic valentines had been purchased by the hostess, the figures cut out and the heads severed from the body and the latter pasted on red hearts cut from paper. These were distributed among the guests with the instruction to match heads to bodies; these were then to be pasted on in their proper place. A heart-shaped box of bonbons decorated with a girl's head was given as a prize to the one that first successfully matched head and body, and a comic valentine to the one who had made the funniest combination and misfit.

In another contest the girls and men were seated at a long table opposite each other. Each one was given a heart-shaped card with pencil attached and told to draw the head of the one facing him or her. A half hour was allowed for the drawing; they were then taken by the hostess, numbered and pinned upon the wall. Slips of paper and pencils were then passed to the guests with the instructions to inspect the pictures, and to guess whom they were intended to represent, putting the numbers down on the slips of paper, and the names opposite them. The one who had drawn the picture which received the most correct guesses, was presented with a heart-shaped stick pin; and the one who had made the most correct guesses also received a small prize.

Partners for refreshments were selected in this manner: A partition of heavy paper was put across the opening between the double doors leading into the reception room. One side of this paper wall was decorated with large red hearts pasted on about five feet above the floor. Holes to the number of girls present were cut in the centre of these hearts large enough for a head to show through. The men were told to select their partners for supper; they were then blindfolded, turned around several times, and told to go and claim the partners they had chosen, but were rarely successful.—Mary M. Wright.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE RICH AMERICAN WOMAN

The independence of the modern type of rich American women means independence first of all from restraint. Such women want pre-eminently their own way, and resent, as impertinent interference, the least hampering of their wishes, the lightest hand laid upon the curb of control holding them back from going the pace they have set for themselves and are determined to follow.

Among the leisured classes of these women, the unwillingness to do the smallest thing outside the line of personal preference and inclination, is matched by an unwillingness to even hear of anything that does not tend to the pursuit of personal gratification.

Greater freedom, is assumed as a mask to cover the avoidance of exertion and so-called hardships, to disguise a constant craving for new excitement and an undue delight in personal notoriety. When these rich women make sacrifices, they make them to gratify tastes in gorgeous and expensive dressing and to keep pace with others who may count millions to their thousands. Conscienceless expenditure and the ceaseless pursuit of vapid and empty pleasure has an ever-increasing effect upon the children in the households presided over by women like these, the deterioration becoming greater with each generation.

Moneyed Exclusiveness.

Women belonging to what in America has come to be called smart society are more and more anxious to use their independence, as a means to render themselves exclusive, by indulging in expenditures from which the general classes of womenkind are debarred. So the possession of great wealth endows its possessors of the second or third remove, with this happy sense of independent exclusiveness founded on the power to buy what others cannot afford to consider. This phase of exclusiveness exhibited in an inclination toward conspicuousness, toward attaining distinction by practicing daring and unconventional attitudes, toward the assumption of a critical condescension in the regard of all outside of a charmed inner circle, has come to be recognized as a characteristic of women belonging to the moneyed aristocracy of this country.

An independent claim to a raise superiority founded on the possession of wealth is in reality a spurious imitation of the history of society in primitive ages, when the acquisition of money conferred power and titles and manor houses. Without these, in a democratic country, women are attempting to-day to repeat a period in which privileged classes then assumed insignia of distinction indicated by their chateaux and palaces, their dress and their retinue of attendants.

The Pity of It.

The pity of such a code of ethics for women is that the code is based not on the hardy principles which lie at the root of American national life and honor, but on the self-indulgent independence of those women who may chance for a short while to pose as leaders of the social world.

Along with other radically changed attitudes on the part of American women is the attitude of the independent class toward work, which is considered degrading. Physical exertion, if required because of economy or necessity, demeans a woman from their standpoint. Idleness has come to be a hall mark of social prominence, and to be socially smart a woman must be able to command the services of a larger staff of domestics than her neighbors.

The really fashionable American women and the most independent, now affect continentalism by having breakfast and spending their mornings in bed. The only business and occupation of interest to them is "the thing" which happens to be important to the coterie of which they are part and parcel, the idle whim of a moment, to be displayed by another equally as unmeaning and vapid in relation to humanity and its vital welfare.

At Finem.

I like to think this friendship that we hold
As youth's high gift in our two hands to-day
Still shall we find us bright, untarnished gold
What time the fleeting years have left us gray.
I like to think we two shall watch the May
Dance down her happy hills, and autumn fold
The world in flame and beauty, we grown old
Staunch comrades on in undivided way.

I like to think of winter nights made bright
By book and hearth flame when we two shall smile
At memories of to-day—we two content
To count our vanished dawns by candlelight
Seeing we hold in our old hands the while
That gift of gold youth left us as she went.
—Theodosia Garrison, in February Ainslee's.

New Colors Darker.

Certain colors never go out of fashion and others are doomed to a short life by the very quality that makes them popular. Navy blue is one of the colors whose popularity never seems to fluctuate from season to season, probably because it is so universally becoming. The browns are more variable, but this year they are considered extremely smart, especially in their darker shades—Kaffir, nutmeg, seal and walnut.

In fact, all the new colors are perceptibly darker. Black is the smartest color of the season but its effect is far from being sober or sombre, because it is always relieved by white or by some vivid color. It has had its effect on other colors; the smart blues are almost black, the new greens are the deep shades of tea-leaf and winter-green, and prune is the most popular shade of purple. Black used to be kept almost entirely for older women, but dressmakers are beginning to appreciate the fact that it is not becoming unless a woman has youth, health and a good color. Even then it has to be broken with blue, green, gold, etc., to give it the life it needs.

Cucumber Relish.

Take two dozen sl— cucumberz and add two tablespoonfuls of salt. Tie in a bag and drain overnight. In the morning add six large onions, sliced, one sweet green pepper, two sweet red peppers, chopped fine, three tablespoonfuls of sugar, one tablespoonful of salt, one ounce of white mustard seed, one-half ounce of celery seed, one-quarter ounce of whole all spice, one-quarter ounce of whole cloves, one-quarter ounce of ground ginger, one-quarter ounce of black pepper and one-quarter ounce of turmeric. Place in kettle and cover with vinegar. Let boil till well heated through, put in jars and seal tight.

Illustrated Ballad

A really beautiful series of living pictures may serve for an evening's entertainment. Admission may be charged if the entertainment is for a charitable purpose. "Auld Robin Grey" is the poem to be chosen, and well-known Scotch ballads should be played softly between and during the tableaux. Or, before and after the pictures the ballads might be sung, three or four in succession, and any soft, slow music played with the pictures.

The curtain rises on a large bare room of a Scotch cottage; there should be a fireplace, table and chairs of wood, a chest, a spinning wheel and some wooden stools or a chest. The room is lit by candles on the mantel. Jeanie sits spinning when Jamie comes in; she wears a pretty simple peasant dress in gray, and he has a flannel shirt open at the throat, knee breeches, a large felt hat in his hand. He gestures appropriately as he tells his story, while some one reads aloud very slowly and distinctly the second verse of the poem; the scene shows the courting, the acceptance and last, the final farewell, when Jamie goes to sea.

The second set of pictures shows the same room, but barer and poorer; the mother lies half raised on a cot bed; the old father with his arm in a sling sits by the fire; the daughter is dressed more shabbily, and her face, like those of the parents, is pale; dejected, she sits near the wheel, when in comes Auld Robin Grey, made up to look seventy, with long, gray hair, thin form slightly bent. He greets the father and mother and then Jeanie, who half turns away from him. He draws up a chair and tries to talk with her, but she is unwilling to listen.

The third picture is Jeanie alone; she looks from the window at the back, then wrings her hands and walks about, showing that she fears Jamie is dead.

The fourth picture is the same room, the parents urging Janie to accept Robin; she finally gives him her hand, crying softly, and the parents show gratitude.

The last picture shows another room, handsomely furnished in old-fashioned style, with mahogany, many candles, carved chests or whatever can be procured in keeping with the date; Jeanie, handsomely dressed in satin, wanders about; presently the door slowly opens and Jamie stands there, thin, pale and distressed; Jeanie flies to him and clings while the last verse but one of the poem is read; then she sends him away.

Valentines and Valentine Month

All women know in whose honor the 14th of February is kept. They may make mistakes about other dates on the calendar, but never about this one.

All women keep their first valentine, sent them probably by their first love, who has long ago outgrown the valentine idea. Probably the idea might be revived if the first love could know that however varied and subject to change a woman's life may be, the highly ornate pages adorned with wreathed roses, love birds and sentimental verse, which expressed his callow hopes and fancies, has survived the test of time, along with other things in which the poetry of a woman's life is held and kept sacred.

Of course, in this instance real valentines are talked about. Nowadays anything may be called a valentine, even such material votive offerings as watches and furs. But a genuine valentine should be written and its ardor should glow in verse, to be rightly and truly and purely sentimental.

There is something in the annual approach of the good saint's day, the saint who is the patron and protector of lovers the world over; that makes the heart of even the most prosaic individual beat a little faster than usual; that brings the memory of forgotten love tunes back to the lips of the most cynical and worldlywise.

The sight of a window crowded with quaint and pretty fancies in delicate tinting and tracing, the scene of flowers, violets, roses, mignonette, lilies of the valley, white lilacs—any one or all of these—is apt to bring a message of the season and set in motion the throbbing influences that speak from one heart to another. From youth to youth in its exuberance, from quieter maturity to its dear comrade and chosen companion, from old age, remembering the day of its bravery and its triumphs to old age, the message flashes and evokes an answer in kind.

The world of men and women are all the better for the coming of Valentine's Day. There is care and sordiness and anxiety enough in life for it to be sweetened and lightened by such a festival. It is a blessed thing to put aside materialism for a day and let sentiment rule in its place.

"All the world loves a lover." That must be true, since some hundreds of years ago a man was willing to die for giving protection and help to them, although he was forbidden by Roman law to do so.

There is no greater service that a man or saint can render his fellow-beings than to give his life for them. Humanity can keep the memory of the patron saint of lovers green, and so, in some small measure acknowledge its debt of gratitude. And the blessing of the saint will doubtless abide with all lovers who choose his day to make their vows, with all husbands who pledge anew on the festival lifelong devotion to their wives, with all old people who clasp hands and feel unutterable thankfulness in their hearts to Saint Valentine for having brought them together in their starting out point and kept them sweethearts from first to last.

February Cupid's Month.

February has the distinction of being Cupid's favorite month. The tricksy little god, with the bow and arrows, is supposed to have his peculiar innings just as winter ends and spring begins. Saint Valentine was an early Christian martyr. He little knew when he laid down his life for the faith that throughout the long ages his name would be a toesin for lovers. The tender and poetical missives carried by prosaic Uncle Sam on Saint Valentine's Day are less the fashion than they were when I was a girl. They still delight children, please sentimental folk and afford certain bashful swains an opportunity of showing their devotion to the maidens they admire.

Just a little farther on is the springtime, and those who have ears to hear may even now listen to fairy footfalls in the woods. Don't call it nonsense, for the spirit sometimes hears secrets that it cannot tell. The sap is stirring in the trees, the new leaves are in the making, and the violets and anemones will soon be here. I wonder if Miss Mary Wilkins Freeman will pardon me if I finish this talk with a little stanza of hers, which she once repeated at a luncheon where she and I were guests?

"Spring is stirring to awake
On her violet pillow;
Softly purring down the road
Comes the pussy-willow."

The lovely conceit is worthy, slight as it is, of Mrs. Freeman's delicate and fanciful genius.—Margaret Sangster.

A Ragtime Party.

Nearly every home has it quantity of rags stored away to be made some time into the old-fashioned rag rug or carpet. The quickest way to bring this about is to invite several friends to an afternoon of work disguised as pleasure. A large kitchen in an old farm house is the best place adapted for the purpose, but any room with an open fireplace may be utilized.

Substitute rocking and straight-backed chairs for those of every day use. Spread braided and hooked rugs on the floors. Drape the windows with casement curtains made of muslin, likewise the dresser, or kitchen cabinet, moved in for the occasion. Place a wooden settee before the fireplace. In the fireplace use the old-fashioned brass andirons, and, if possible, swing an iron or copper kettle from a crane. At one side place the long-handled shovel, fire-tongs and bellows, at the other side a foot stool and iron spider. At the chimneyside hang bunches of corn and herbs, while on the shelf above place a large clock with brass candlesticks on either side.

Send the following invitations to yours friends:

"Ye, are asked to ye old Country Rag-Cutting at Mistress Smith's homestead, at five of ye clock, on Wednesday next. Bring ye aprons and scissors, and come prepared to stay to supper, served at seven of ye clock. Ye husband is asked to supper."

It will add to the fun if the ladies come in dresses over hoops, pointed basques and poke-bonnets, and carry reticules. When they arrive present each with a basket of rags to be cut, the one cutting the largest quantity is awarded a suitable prize.

When the men arrive, partners are found for the supper table by a number of articles which are always associated in pairs, as thread and needle, hook and eye and so forth. As each man enters, one such article is fastened to his coat, while the article associated with it is attached to the lady's dress.